



How do environmental narratives transform?

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MANY **PRESSING** CHALLENGES

REQUIRE TRANSFORMATION, RATHER THAN INCREMENTAL CHANGE & TRADE OFFS...



- Narratives are one of the six deep causes of our sustainability challenges identified by the SDG Transformations Forum
- How do (and can) environmental narratives transform?

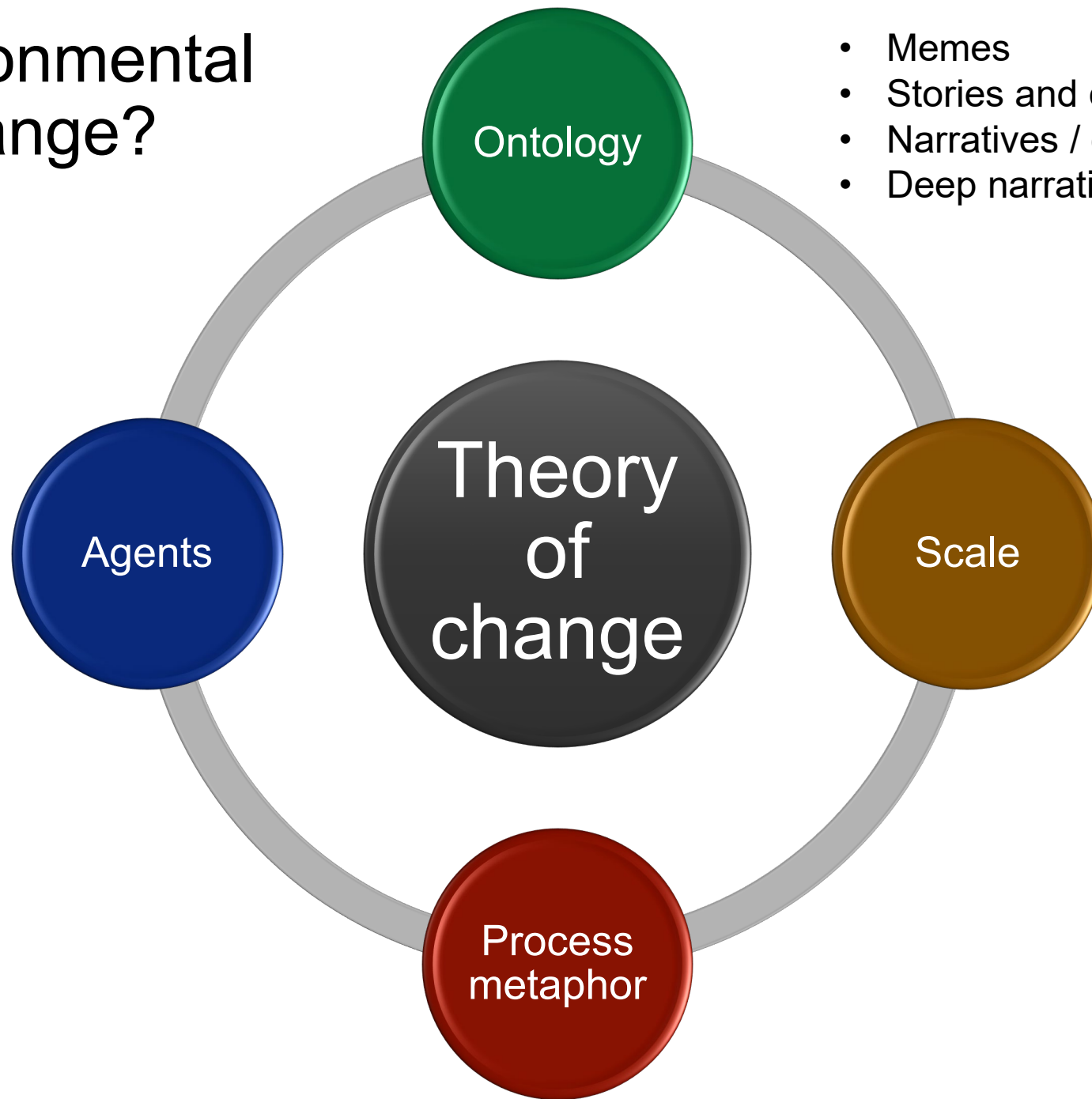
Systematic literature review



- Academic literature – Web of Science and Scopus
- Title search for articles that were about narrative (or story or other similar terms) AND transformation (or change or other similar terms) AND sustainability (or environment or other similar terms)
- 2009 to present
- After removal of duplicates etc, this returned 655 articles
- Reviewed abstracts for sample from 2018-2019:
 - 16% were sufficiently relevant to review in full – explicit discussion of narratives (or other terms) changing
 - Another 33% may have an implicit theory of change that could be drawn out
- Presentation today is based on full review of 25 highly relevant articles from 2018-2019 and the abstract review



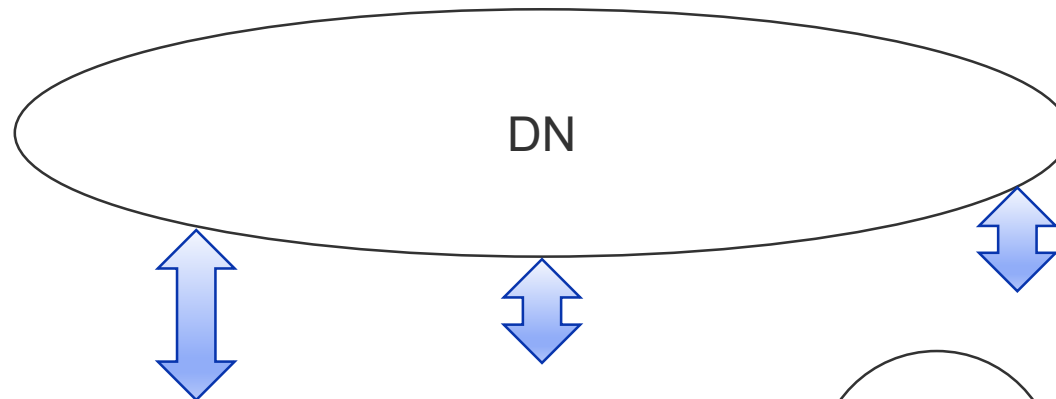
How do environmental narratives change?



- Memes
- Stories and other communicative forms
- Narratives / discourses / worldviews
- Deep narrative

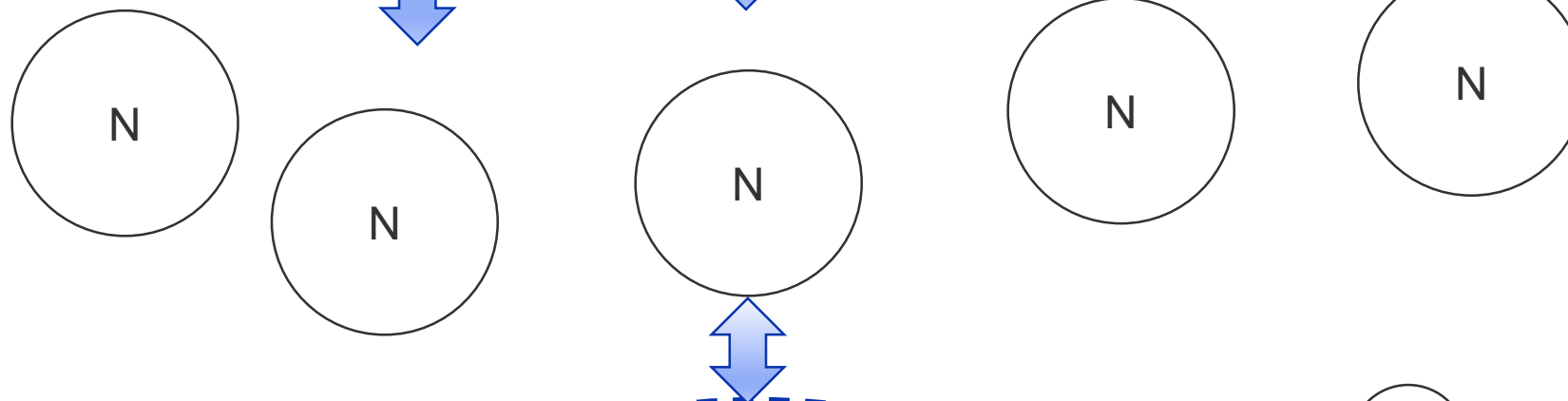


Deep narrative



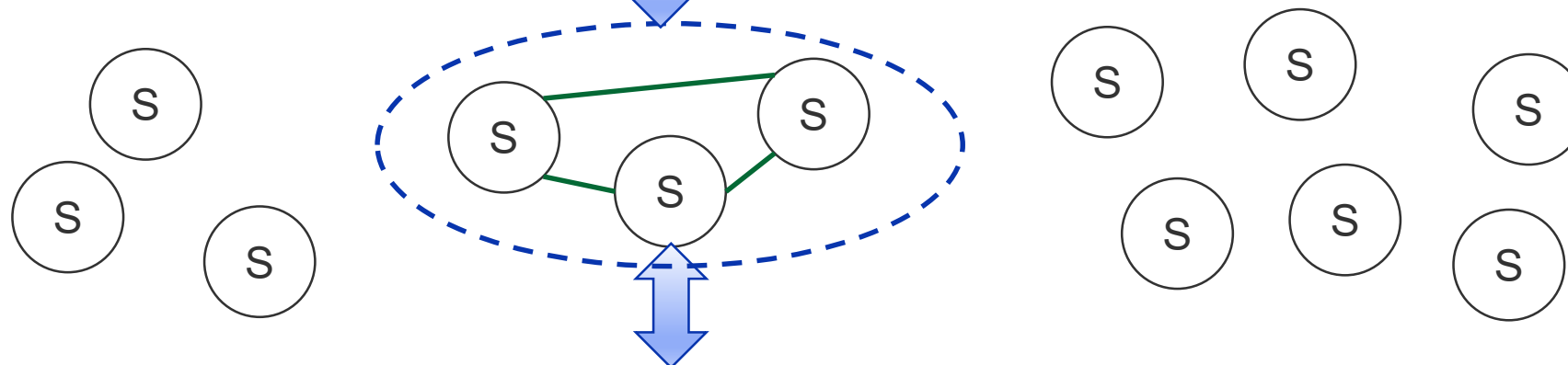
Pervasive,
intractable
narratives, e.g.
neoliberalism

**Narratives /
discourses /
worldviews**



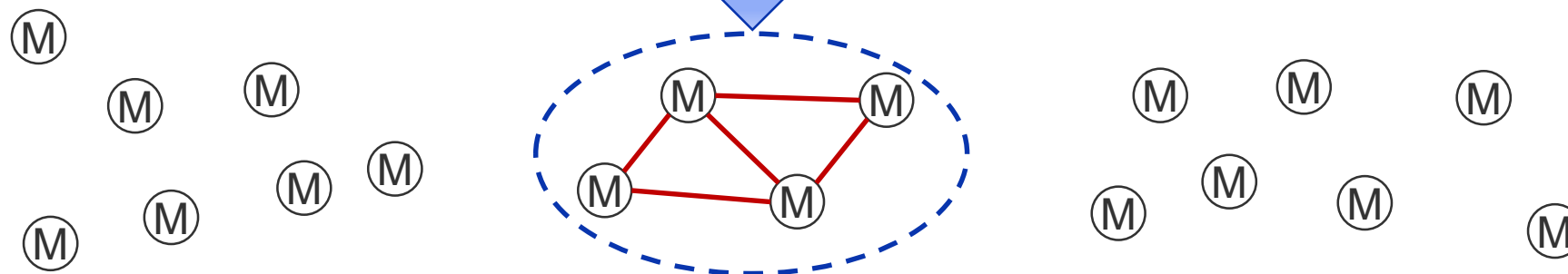
A system of related
communications
that represents a
central idea or belief

**Communicative
forms**



- Stories
- Arguments
- Art
- Information
- Rhetoric
- Visions

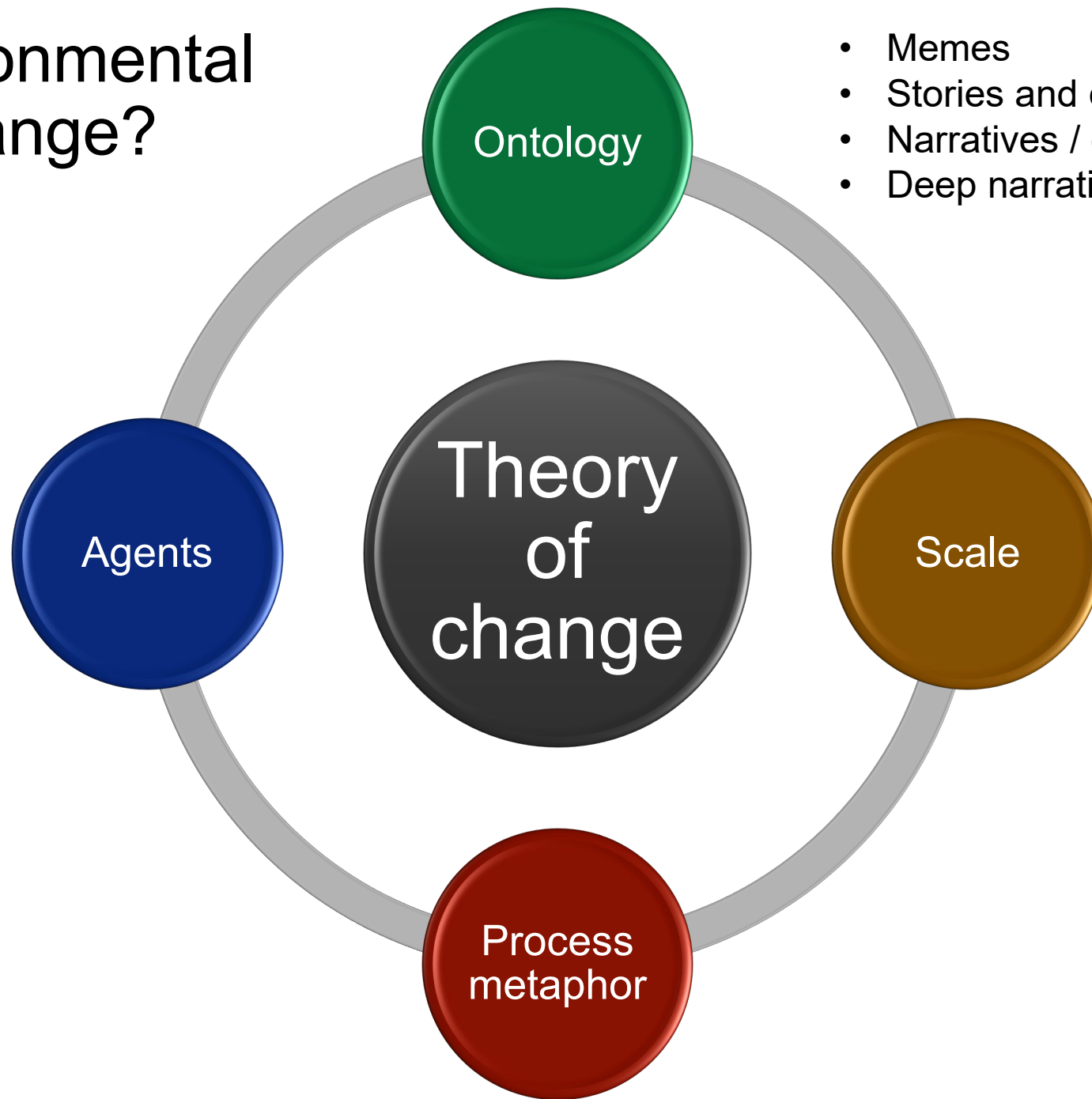
Memes



- Tropes
- Archetypes
- Metaphors
- Frames



How do environmental narratives change?

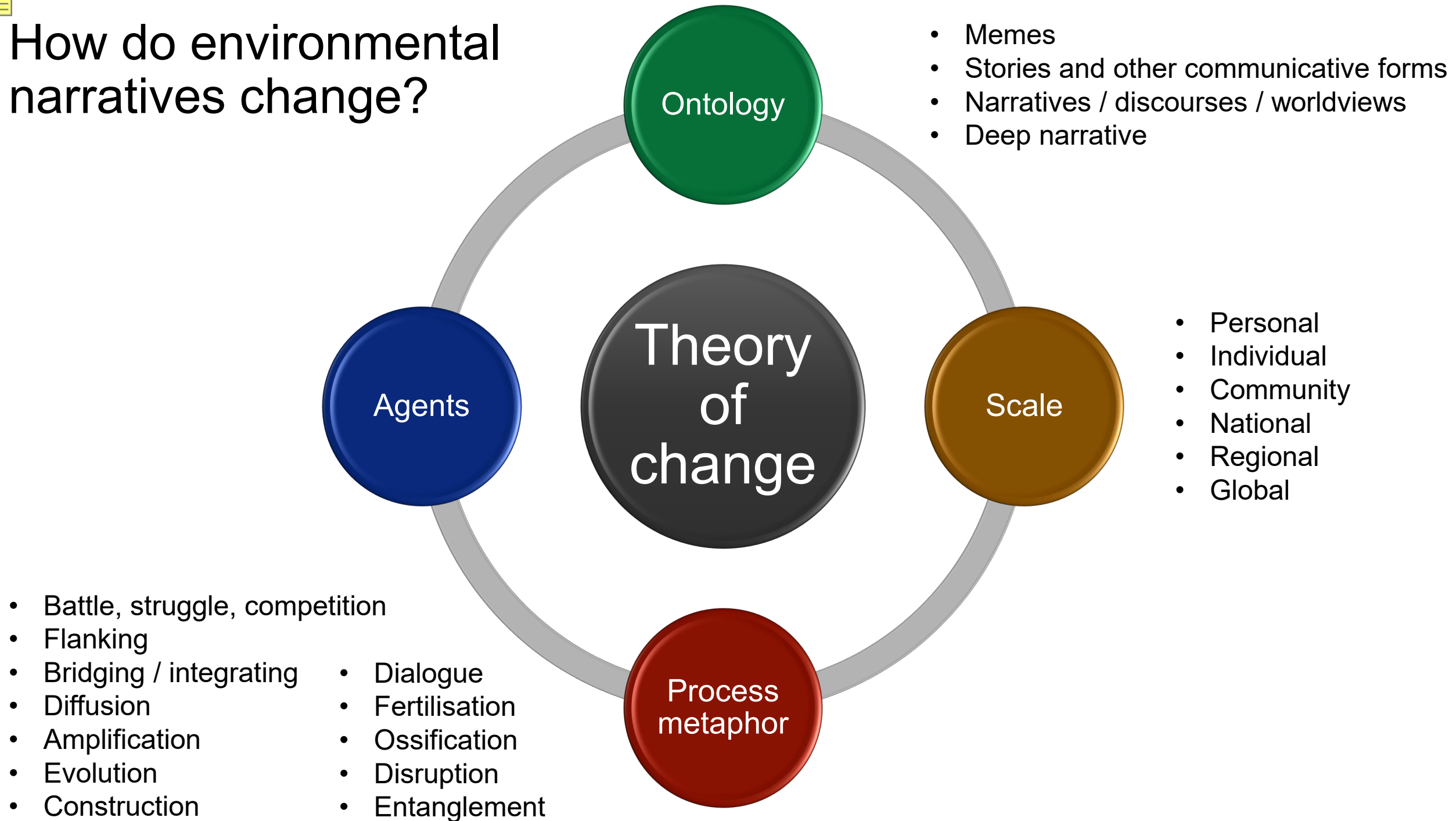


- Memes
- Stories and other communicative forms
- Narratives / discourses / worldviews
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- Personal
- Individual
- Community
- National
- Regional
- Global



How do environmental narratives change?

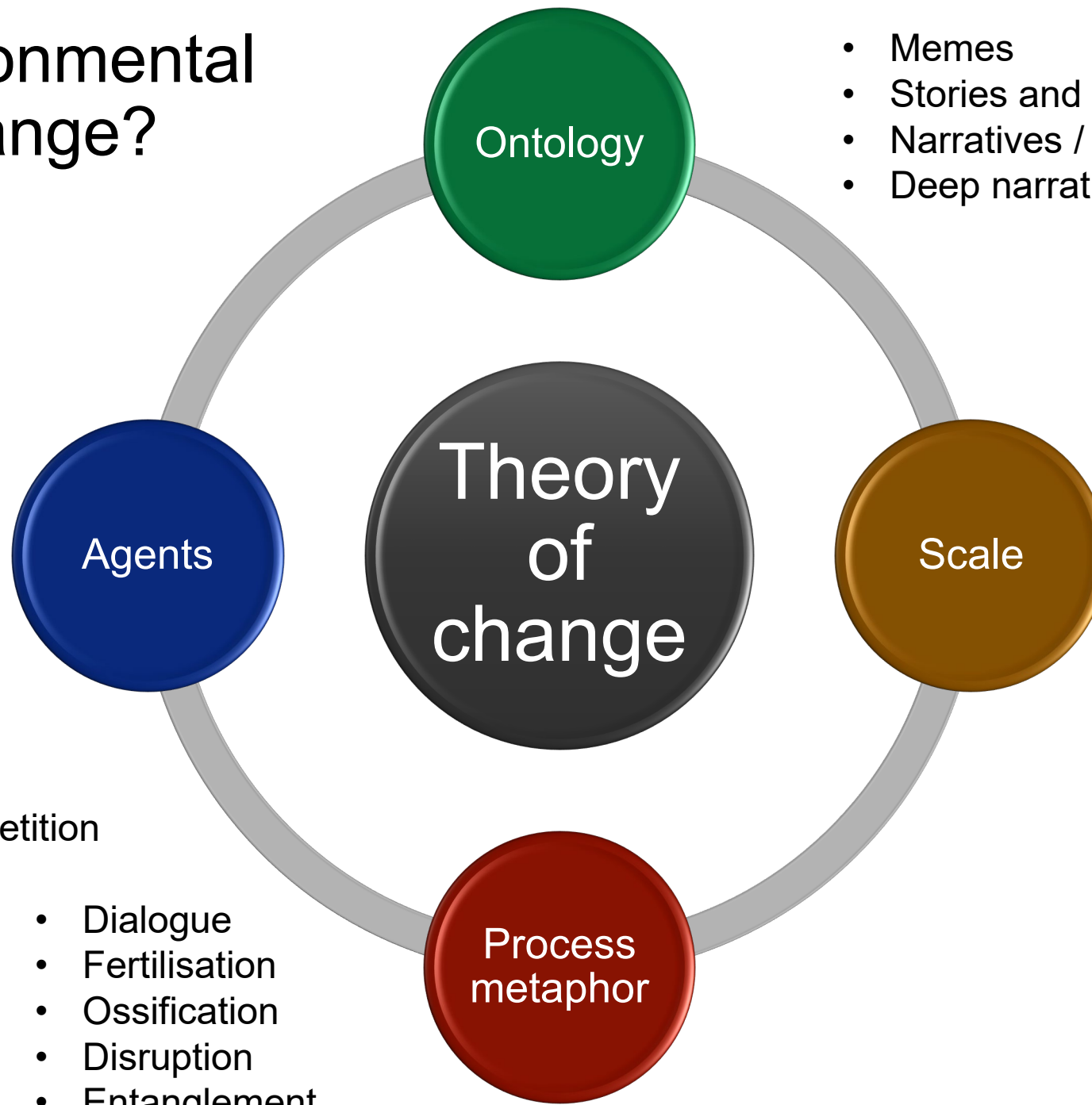




How do environmental narratives change?

- Individuals
- Discourses
- Discourse coalitions
- Stories / storylines
- Media actors
- Influencers
- Activists
- Disruptive events

- Battle, struggle, competition
- Flanking
- Bridging / integrating
- Diffusion
- Amplification
- Evolution
- Construction



Conclusion (for now)



- Huge complexity due to diverse assumed ontologies, scales, process metaphors and agents
- This is appropriate due to varying contexts and scales in which people work
- An overly simplified summary:
 1. Find ways to disrupt existing narrative landscape, or take advantage of disruptions that do occur, e.g.:
 - Draw attention to contradictions in dominant narratives
 - Connect with other emerging narratives
 2. Deploy compelling memes and stories:
 - More memorable and able to stick, i.e. compatible with human brains and culture
 - Able to capture attention, perhaps through novelty or a new insight
 - Tailored to the community of interest
 - Includes a clear call and pathway to action
 3. Create spaces where people can generate their own stories and pursue their own transformative learning



Survey link

New Stories for a Sustainable Future